

# Let Sleeping Guards Lie

by Alex Clippinger



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# Introduction

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"I want to sneak up on him..."

You know where this is going. You've seen it a few times. As your player continues, you can practically mouth the words along with them; "...and get him while he's asleep. Instant kill, right? Because he's sleeping?"

You've seen this before. There's no good reason to say 'no.' So, you don't. You pull out this supplement. And with a sadistic smile, you say "You definitely attack him, *but...*"

## Using This Supplement

This supplement is worded for attacking a sleeping guard, but many entries can be used for other snoozing foes.

These entries are divided into two main categories; short-term and long-term. Short-term consequences tend to resolve instantly or within a few short hours of the event. Long-term consequences could persist for days, throw a wrench in a group's plans over time, or begin their own sub-plots and side quests.

Each of the two main categories are further divided into three sub categories. 'Irrelevant' consequences tend to be more flavorful or even humorous than they are meaningful. 'Inconvenient' consequences present less-than-ideal circumstances that characters might have to deal with. 'Dangerous' consequences usually involve potential harm, scenarios that will present the risk of long-term obstacles, or similar.

Some of these entries contain specific damage, which you can obviously fiddle with at your leisure. Other entries will use language based on the rules for traps and hazards (either setback, dangerous, or deadly) that are described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and scale with party level.





# Short-Term

## Irrelevant

1. The guard is killed. If the adventurers search the body, they discover a letter from the guard's family about how proud they are and how this is the guard's big break. "Good luck on your first day!"

2. Right before the character can strike a killing blow, a piece of stone from a nearby building/ceiling/etc dislodges and falls, striking the guard's head and killing them instantly.

3. The guard's body slumps over, and the attacking character realizes the guard was already dead. Someone else has already come this way—are they after the same goal?

4. The attack misses by sheer random happenstance, but the guard is so shocked by the attack they choke on a piece of food they were chewing on or suffer a massive coronary, dying on the spot.

5. The guard dies, their body toppling over. It's revealed the guard was actually three halflings standing on each other's shoulders in the same uniform. Inexplicably, the attack appears to have killed all three of them.

6. The guard flashes in and out of existence upon being attacked. A large '100' floats up from their form before they vanish with a pop, leaving a small shower of copper coins in their place.

7. A goblin appears out of nowhere to ambush the guard, stabbing them in the gut. The guard strikes a retaliatory blow before dying, killing the goblin before perishing themselves.

8. A planar portal to the Plane of Ice randomly appears above the guard's head, instantly freezing them solid. An icy elemental sticks its head through, looks around for a moment, and retreats. Before the portal closes, characters who understand Primordial hear "Wrong plane, you idiot!"

## Inconvenient

1. The guard is actually a meat-puppet mascot for a butcher's shop that has been dressed in armor for some kind of promotion. The character who attacked the guard now has a lingering meat-stench for the next two hours that makes them easier to detect by smell, and some coupons.

2. Upon being killed, the guard gives an obnoxiously loud and long death rattle that carries on for almost a full minute and can be heard by anyone within a hundred feet. Repeatedly attacking the dying guard appears to only punctuate the death rattle with grunts.

3. The guard is killed, and such a near-comical volume of blood is expelled that anyone within 5 feet of the body must make a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone.

4. The guard is killed but shifts in such a way that the weapon that struck them is now lodged in the armor or body and can't be removed without considerable noise.

5. The guard dies, and a radiant light bursts forth from their body. A shining, spectral image rises from the corpse, declaring in a booming that they were a celestial imprisoned in the mortal prison of a common humanoid. The celestial may grant a favor or boon to the one who 'freed' them.

6. As the guard dies, in their last moments they discover the latent magical talent they never knew they had. Roll once on the Wild Magic Surge table for the sorcerer class archetype.

7. The guard is killed, but as they die a number of civilian witnesses stumble upon the area and witness the murder. They draw in breath, ready to shout, or run, or both.

8. In their death spasms, the guard strikes an unexpectedly heavy blow against their attacker, spraining their wrist or ankle. The character loses their ability modifier to melee attacks with this hand, or has disadvantage on ability checks for jumping and balancing, until they complete a long rest.



## Dangerous

1. The guard is killed, but one of their fellows arrives in view at that exact moment. They tearfully declare that the guard in question was only two weeks from retirement before attacking or crying for help.

2. The guard begins to swell up like a balloon. They will continue to increase in size for three rounds, at which point they will burst. Dealing damage to the guard will cause them to pop earlier. When the guard pops, they deal thunder damage in a 5-foot radius around them equal to 1d8 plus an additional 1d8 for each round they continued to swell (up to 4d8 maximum). Additionally, the bursting guard can be heard in a 25-foot radius, plus an additional 50 feet for each round they continued to swell (to a maximum of 175 feet).

3. The guard should have died, but they're actually some kind of clockwork humanoid! The contraption sputters to life and attacks more ferociously than a normal humanoid guard is capable of! Use the statblock of a tougher NPC or modify the existing statblock to pose a stronger challenge.

4. The guard dies, their body knocking over (or dropping) a lantern which breaks, starting a fire that quickly catches on nearby flammable objects.

5. The guard is actually a clockwork humanoid that slumps over, dead, but immediately begins to tick loudly. After one round the clockwork guard explodes, dealing 'dangerous' level trap fire damage in a 5-foot radius (Dexterity save halves).

6. The guard dies, but their body suddenly blackens with necrotic energy. The striking creature makes a Constitution saving throw or it takes deadly-trap levels of necrotic damage.

7. The guard's already-dead body bursts apart as a **swarm of spiders** (either as the monster stat block or as a dangerous hazard) comes skittering out of the corpse and attacks.

8. Before the killing blow is struck, the street or ground the guard is on suddenly collapses into a sinkhole. The guard dies instantly; anyone else within 5 feet must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or fall in and take damage (dangerous hazard).





# Long-Term

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## Irrelevant

1. The guard appears to die from the attack. Later it's implied they actually survived the ordeal and earned a nickname among fellow guards based on the injuries they suffered, such as "Glass Ribs" or "Old Whistle-Neck."
2. The guard is killed. Intermittently throughout the following weeks and months, charity events are held to support the guard's family.
3. The guard's death causes the local authorities to crack down on common criminals. Many local thieves and miscreants are arrested, actually resulting in relatively cleaner streets for a brief time.
4. The guard's body opens with a pneumatic hiss, revealing more than a dozen rats furiously working levers and gears inside the artificial humanoid shell. The rats scatter in all directions; those who can understand animals' speech hear them squealing "the Ratvolution is ruined! Flee!" Forever afterward, perceptive characters occasionally notice rats furtively huddled together or tiny 'Ratvolution' graffiti on walls at rat-height.
5. The attack misses as the guard jerks awake. They jump up in surprise and begin to run, going headfirst into an obstacle and knocking themselves out.
6. The attack passes through the guard's form, revealing it to be an illusion. The local wizard's guild has begun a program of convincing illusions; there are many fake guards, fake walls, fake witnesses, and fake defenses around local businesses and other important sites to confound and discourage criminals.
7. The attack clangs off of the—statue? It's an incredibly convincing statue. Some guerilla street artist begins placing these statues every so often, attracting the attention of the local art community.
8. As the character strikes the killing blow, an electric vortex appears. An older version of the guard appears, saying "Don't be alarmed! I've come from the distant

future to—" They see the just-killed younger version of themselves, say "oh," and pop out of existence.

## Inconvenient

1. The guard is killed instantly but returns as a haunting spirit that only the person who killed them can hear and see. The spirit attempts to inconvenience their killer until the character makes amends. The ghost's actions include wailing loudly over conversations or talking loudly while the character is trying to rest.
2. The guard was actually a member of the local clergy who volunteers one night a week. The clergy (and their patron deity) are now furiously searching for the killer(s) with the assistance of divine magic.
3. The guard is killed. This spurs the city to invest in their guards; within a week, all guards are more heavily armored and never work without at least one partner, which also increases their vigilance. Prices on many goods increase as more taxes pay for the additional equipment and manpower.
4. The guard is killed. The local government imposes policies in response that makes it much easier to track the movement and activities of everyone in the city, especially non-residents. This causes an increase in taxes and prices to pay for the additional bureaucracy.
5. The guard is killed. Locals become highly distrustful of 'shady' characters, which usually includes adventurers. Prices are higher, services are refused, and inns shut their doors in the characters' faces.
6. An amulet the guard was wearing flashes a blinding pink. The attacker must make a Wisdom saving throw or be cursed. Their skin turns bright pink and glows slightly, imposing disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks until the effect can be removed.
7. The only witness to the killing is a simple alley cat. A simple, talking alley cat who follows the party, hissing words like "Murderrrrrr" and asking passerby "Hey, did you know this guy killed a guy?" The cat seems impossible to dispose of or escape from, and its motives are unclear.
8. The guard is killed, but their body suddenly transforms to resemble the one who killed them. Attempts to maim, disguise, or destroy the body are unsuccessful.



## Dangerous

1. The guard dies, transforming back into its doppelganger form. The players are now caught up in a miniature conspiracy involving doppelganger infiltrators throughout the city, who assume the adventurers are aware of the plot and must now be disposed of.

2. The guard was actually a member of the local clergy who volunteers one night a week. A full-blown inquisition is started by the deity's church, using fervor and divine magic to discover the culprit.

3. The guard dies but returns within 1d4 days as a **revenant** bent on revenge.

4. The guard is killed but returns within 1d4 hours as a **zombie** that begins wandering and attacking any living creature it can reach. Unchecked, it kills civilians and starts a broader investigation.

5. The guard is the relative of a noble, who hires a bounty hunter or private investigator to learn who killed the guard. The hired professional is highly intelligent and has a knack for detecting falsehood.

6. The guard's death is blamed on a regional faction, race, religion, or rival. Many (possibly the characters) are drafted into service to bring 'justice' to the 'culprits,' which may result in persecution or war crimes against a group innocent of the original crime.

7. It is later discovered that the guard was a member of a devilish or demonic cult. The cult attempts to discover the killer and plague them with paranoia and madness.

8. The guard wasn't asleep; they were passed out in the grips of a deadly plague. The attacking character has exposed themselves and the rest of the party as the sickness begins to spread through the local population.





## Credits

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